

Message Text

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46

ACTION EA-10

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MANILA 913

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TAGS: PINT, ELAB, RP

SUBJ: CHURCH-STATE RELATIONS: CMLC MEETING

REF: A) MANILA 765; B) MANILA 766

SUMMARY: CONTRARY TO CHURCH EXPECTATIONS, MILITARY DID NOT ANNOUNCE RESULTS INVESTIGATION CHARGES OF MALTREATMENT AT CAMP OLIVAS. IN EXCHANGE OF VIEWS ON COMING REFERENDUM, MILITARY COMPLAINED ABOUT CIRCULATION MINDANAO/SULU REFERENDUM BOYCOTT MANIFESTO AND SIMILAR ECUMENICAL MANIFESTO FROM MANILA AREA. ANY GOODWILL TO BE GAINED BY GOVERNMENT ADMISSION OF WRONG-DOING AT CAMP OLIVAS WILL NOW RAPIDLY DISSIPATE IF DELAY TACTICS CONTINUE. CHURCH HIERARCHY CONTINUING MOVE VERY CAUTIOUSLY ON POTENTIALLY EXPLOSIVE REFERENDUM BOYCOTT ISSUE. END SUMMARY.

1. DURING COURSE LABATT DISCUSSIONS JANUARY 20 WITH CBCP (CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE OF PHILIPPINES) SECRETARY GENERAL MSGR. BEN ALMOCEDA (TOGETHER WITH CBCP COLLEAGUES MSGR. PARADO AND MSGR. YLLANA) AND NASSA (NATIONAL SECRETARIAT OF SOCIAL ACTION) EXECUTIVE SECRETARY FR. LUIS HECHANNOVA, EMBASSY LEARNED FOLLOWING REGARDING JANUARY 17 CMLC (CHURCH-MILITARY LIAISON COMMITTEE) MEETING. ALL CHURCHMEN MENTIONED ABOVE HAD CONFIDENTIAL

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PARTICIPATED IN MEETING.

2. CONTRARY TO EXPECTATIONS CHURCH DELEGATION, MILITARY DID NOT REPEAT NOT ANNOUNCE RESULTS INVESTIGATION OF CHARGES MALTREATMENT POLITICAL PRISONERS AT CAMP OLIVAS (REF. A), CLAIMING THEY "STILL FINALIZING DETAILS". MILITARY HAD, HOWEVER, POINTED OUT SOMEWHAT DEFENSIVELY THAT DURING LAST MONTH ALONE SOME 115 MILITARY MEN -- INCLUDING 7 OFFICERS -- HAD BEEN "WEDED OUT OF SERVICE" FOR SUCH OFFENSES AS ABUSE OF USE OF FIREARMS, ETC.

3. CMLC MEMBERS ALSO EXCHANGED VIEWS ON COMING REFERENDUM. MILITARY COMPLAINED ABOUT MINDANAO/SULU REFERENDUM BOYCOTT MANIFESTO (REF. B) AND A SIMILAR ECUMENICAL MANIFESTO FROM MANILA AREA (SIGNED BY VARIOUS RELIGIOUS LEADERS INCLUDING CMLC MEMBERS FR. ORTIZN REV. GEORGE CASTRO AND FR. HECHANONA), ASKING IF THEY REPERSENTED VIEWS OF CHURCH AS WHOLE. MILITARY ADDED THEY HAD RECEIVED REPORTS THAT REFERENDUM BOYCOTT MANIFESTO HAD BEEN READ FROM PULPITS IN OZAMIS, MINDANAO. BISHOP ALMARIO, CHAIRMAN OF CHURCH DELEGATIN, REPLIED CBCP HAD TAKEN NO POSITION ON REFERENDUM. CHURCH THEN RAISED QUESTION CONSTITUTIONALITY OF ANNOUNCED PENALTY FOR NON-PARTICIPATION IN REFERENDUM. MILITARY SPOKESMAN REPLIED THAT WAS MATTER FOR SUPREME COURT TO DECIDE.

4. FOR FIRST TIME SINCE CMLC MACHINERY SET UP, JOINT COMMUNIQUE ISSUED AFTER MEETING. IT WAS SIGNED BY BISHOP ALMARIO AND DEFENSE UNDERSECRETARY CRISOL. IN PAST, GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN UNWILLING CONSIDER JOINT PRESS RELEASE AND PRESS LEAKS HAVE RESULTED IN SLANTED ACCOUNTS FROM BOTH SIDES OF CMLC PROCEEDINGS. COMMUNIQUE LARGELY AVOIDED DELICATE ISSUES OF MALTREATMENT OF PRISONERS AND REFERENDUM BOYCOTT DISCUSSION, THROUGH CHURCH PANNEL INSISTED CERTAIN INACCURACIES IN NEWS REPORTING FOLLOWING JANUARY 6 EMERGENCY MEETING (MANILA 240) BE CORRECTED. AS CONSEQUENCE, COMMUNIQUE REFERRED TO EARLIER "ADMISSION BY THE MILITARY THAT, ALTHOUGH NOT SANCTIONED, IT IS POSSIBLE SOME MILITARY MEN MAY HAVE COMMITTED CERTAIN EXCESSES IN THE PERFORMANCE OF THEIR DUTIES."

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5. COMMENT: PROMPT PUBLIC ADMISSION OF WRONG-DOING AT CAMP OLIVAS DURING CMLC MEETING WOULD HAVE BEEN WELCOME INDICATION GOP INDEED ACTING IN GOOD FAITH. ANY GOOD-WILL TO BE GAINED BY ADMISSION WILL NOW RAPIDLY DIS-SIPATE IF DELAY TACTICS CONTINUE. FR. ORTIZ OF CMLC HAS APPARENTLY BEEN ASSURED PRIVATELY THAT MILITARY WILL ISSUE STATEMENT ON MATTER "SHORTLY", AND FOR TIME BEING ARCHBISHOP SIN WILL NOT EXERT FURTHER PRESSURE. WITH

RESPECT POTENTIALLY EXPLOSIVE REFERENDUM BOYCOTT ISSUE,
CHURCH HIERARCHY CONTINUING MOVE VERY CAUTIOUSLY. ARCH-
BISHOP SIN, FOR EXAMPLE, IS PASSING WORD TO PRIESTS IN
MANILA ARCHDIOCESE TO "KEEP COOL" ON REFERENDUM MATTER. MSGR.
YLLANA SPREADING WORD TO HIS MILITARY CONTACTS THAT MINDANAO/SULU
LIBERAL WING BISHOPS ARE AFTER ALL ONLY MINORITY OF HALF DOZEN
OR SO, AND REMAINDER OF 67 BISHOPS "BASICALLY SUPPORT
PRESIDENT MARCOS."
SULLIVAN

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